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Vendor for Holistic Assistance Response Team (HART) Selected, A New Program Taking a Public Health Approach to Violence Prevention

HART is One of Two Pilot programs will launch in two communities in Harris County this Spring

Houston – Today the Harris County Commissioners Court approved DEMA Consulting & Management as the contracted service provider for the Holistic Assistance Response Team (HART), one of two new programs aimed at addressing community safety using a public health approach that will be administered by Harris County Public Health (HCPH).

“Health-based first responders have a proven track record for making communities safer by getting the right resources to people immediately and free up law enforcement time for serious crimes. This is an effective, common sense approach to make our community safer and stronger,” said Precinct 1 Commissioner Rodney Ellis, whose Office championed the establishment of these programs within Harris County Public Health (HCPH).

The Holistic Alternative Responder Team (HART) will consist of trained health and social service professionals to assist dispatchers with the Harris County Sheriff’s Office. The program aims to improve community health and safety by quickly responding appropriately to residents experiencing homelessness, behavioral health issues, or non-emergency medical concerns. This program has helped reduce unnecessary law enforcement and hospital-based interventions.

“HART is a historic investment in public safety, and I’m excited to see this cutting-edge program be launched soon. As a longtime member of law enforcement who has seen firsthand what’s happening in some communities, I know that having the right people respond to a scene can make all the difference between a positive or tragic outcome,” said Precinct 2 Commissioner Adrian Garcia. “I commend the Department of Public Health and Director Robinson for their work on HART and look forward to seeing how it will make a difference.”

DEMA Consulting & Management was selected as the HART service provider based on their track record of providing holistic and individualized services utilizing trauma-informed, culturally competent, and multidisciplinary approaches.

The HART program will operate as one of two pilot programs under the Community Health and Violence Prevention Services (CHVPS) Division at HCPH and will begin operating in the Cypress Station area this Spring.

The other initiative is the Community Violence Interruption Program whose core function will be a community-based solution to reduce gun violence. The program will identify the potential for gun violence and threats at an individual level before they occur. A team of Community Outreach Specialists will also work to address root causes of violence at the community level and violence at hospitals by meeting with victims, families, and individuals impacted by violent events. The Community Violence Interruption Program will be piloted in two communities: Sunnyside and Cypress Station.

“Similar programs to those being launched at HCPH have been proven successful in other parts of the country and helped reduce hospitalizations for violent injuries and reduce law enforcement’s role in behavioral and social

HCPH is the local public health agency for the Harris County, Texas jurisdiction. It provides a wide variety of public health activities and services aimed at improving the health and well-being of the Harris County community.

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service response calls,” said Lupe Washington, CHVPS Division Director.

Both programs are set to launch this Spring and along with interrupting or addressing immediate health or social needs also address root causes of violence to support emotional well-being, economic opportunity, and self-sufficiency over time.

“I would like to emphasize it is not enough to just provide immediate assistance responding to potential violence, but really address the root causes as well. Getting individuals in these programs connected to health, mental health, food assistance, economic and employment assistance is vital in helping prevent future violence, and achieve better outcomes that strengthen our communities,” said HCPH Executive Director, Barbie Robinson.

For additional information please visit our [Community Health and Violence Prevention Services webpage](#).

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